

HEADSTOCK

The Newsletter of the
Bedford District of the
Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers

January 2017

Web Version

This version of Headstock has photographs with reduced quality.

It also has contact details of people removed.
Personal contact details can be found in your Tower's copy of
Headstock, or in the latest Annual Report.

From the Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow District officers and our other committee members for their work throughout the year. Bob Jones has continued to serve as District Secretary and Jenny Thompson as District Treasurer. The role of District BRF Treasurer has continued to be combined with those of RJ Sharp Fund Rep and Association BRF Rep and Martin Goodwin has taken on those responsibilities this year. Ann Desics, Anna Townsend, Sarah Ward and Barbara Woplin have served on the District Committee this year. James Saunders has continued to be our Ringing Master and Maureen Hall kindly produces Headstock for us.

Looking forwards, please note District Quarter Peal Week which runs from March 4 -12, deliberately including two weekends. Hopefully some towers will be able to ring quarters with a home band during this period. If you are not fortunate enough to be in this position but would like to ring a quarter then please let a committee member know and attempts can be made to organise something for you.

Another thing we would like input on is training. Whilst we could make some guesses as to what people might like to take part in, it is also possible to try and respond to requests. Do also remember that if there is something in particular that you would like to ring it can be requested at our District ringing events.

Alex Nash
District Chairman

Bedford District Programme of Meetings and Events 2017

This is a provisional programme, for confirmation see The Ringing World or phone the Secretary, Bob Jones.

- 21 Jan 2017: **Bedford, St Peter de Merton** (8) 3.30 pm
Annual District Meeting
Afternoon Ringing, Service, Tea,
6.00 pm Business Meeting
Bedford, St Paul (12)
Evening Ringing up to 9.00 pm
- 4 Feb 2017: **Wootton** (6) 10.00 – 11.00 am
Morning ringing
Cranfield (6) 11.15 am – 12.15 pm
- 4 Mar 2017: **Bromham** (8) 7.30 – 9.00 pm
Evening Ringing
- 4–12 Mar 2017: **QP Week**
- 1 Apr 2017: **Sharnbrook** (8) 3.30 – 8.30 pm
Quarterly District Meeting
Afternoon Ringing, Service, Tea,
6.00 pm Business Meeting
Evening Ringing

Future Events

- 20 May 2017: Association AGM, St Andrew, Biggleswade
17 June 2017: Ridgman Trophy, Great St Mary Cambridge
16 Sept 2017: Association Striking Contest, Colmworth
20 Jan 2018: Annual District Meeting, Bromham

Young Ringers' Events

- 1 July 2017: Ringing World National Youth Contest, Birmingham
24 Sept 2017: (Sunday) Young Ringers' Striking Contest

For details of eligibility and practices being held in the run-up to the 2017 National event, see the Association website www.bacbr.org.uk or contact Sue Silver president@bacbr.org.uk.

Report of Bedford Quarterly District Meeting on 1 October 2016

Alex Nash was in the Chair at St Andrew, Bedford, and he thanked the Vicar Revd James Reveley and Curate Revd Atalie Gaines for conducting the service and for permission to use the bells and Hall, also Andrew the accompanist and all those who had provided tea.

The minutes of the July meeting at Odell were read and approved.

The BRF stood at £17,793 with no applications having been received. Richard Hillson asked whether his question regarding RJ Sharp Fund Rule 2b had been considered by the Trustees at their meeting in July. Andrew Dennison had proposed to add "and Churches" after "District Committees" and this will be discussed by the Association General Committee.

There were no new members to be elected.

Barbara Woplin thanked all those who had helped with the Young Ringers' practices held during the school summer holidays, and plans for next summer's practices were discussed. Other recent events were also reported on.

District events for the next quarter were announced. The Association General Committee is to have a meeting in October in addition to the annual one in February, this was to be attended by Alex Nash, Bob Jones and Jenny Thompson from the Bedford District.

A request was made for people to consider standing for vacancies which may arise at the Annual District Meeting in January.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now due for payment, which has to be made before the Association Annual General Meeting on 20 May. The subscription for resident ringing members over the age of 19 is £10 per year, the rate for under-19s is £2.50.

If you are a UK taxpayer and pay the full £10 annual subscription, please consider signing a "Gift Aid Declaration" so that the Association can claim back the tax on it. A form for doing this can be downloaded from the Association website **www.bacbr.org.uk**.

"More from the Bell Tower" (St Peter, Bedford)

I was thumbing through the pages of *The Ringing World*, a weekly newspaper for bellringers, and came across an article containing a photo of eight ladies, taken in July 1912 after they had just rung the first peal ever by an all ladies band in Christchurch, Cubitt Town, London. 2012 was the 100th anniversary of this epic event and it was quite an achievement, especially in those days, when church bellringing was a very male dominated activity. They all came from different parts of England and got together to achieve a first for women. This must have been the start of bellringers' "Women's Lib"! In fact, shortly afterwards they all became founder members of the Ladies Guild of Change Ringers which still exists today.

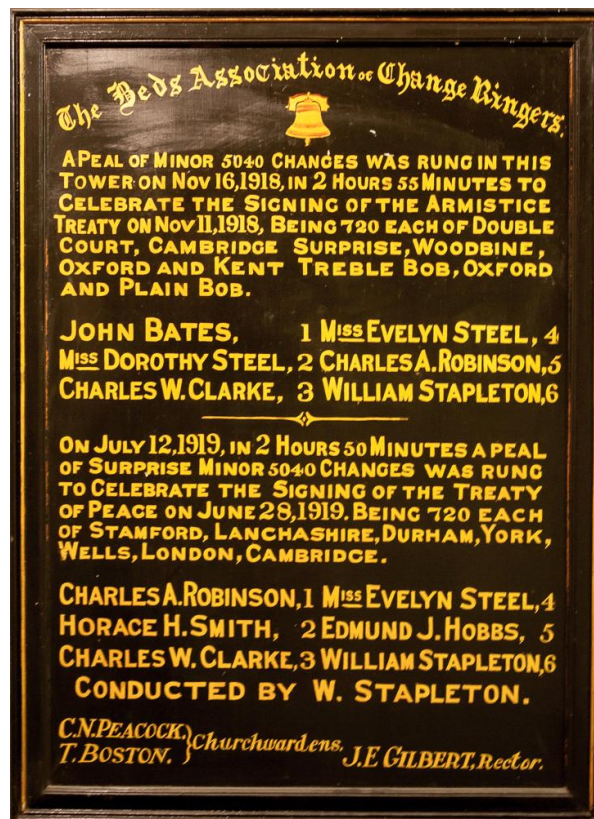


The 'All Ladies' band, 1912

My interest was aroused by the fact that one of those ladies was Miss Evelyn Steel (the one standing on the far right). She was a regular ringer here at St Peter's for very many years and her name appears on some of our peal boards along with that of her sister, Dorothy Steel.



Dorothy Dyne Steel 1884-1965



Peal board in St Peter's tower

The two peals depicted on this board were rung to celebrate the end of World War 1.

I browsed through the ringing archives of the Bedfordshire Association and Richard Entwistle searched on the Internet to find out more about the two sisters. Evelyn was born in 1879 and Dorothy in 1884 in the

small village of Woodsetts, South Yorkshire. They had a brother and two more sisters who were not ringers. Their father, Revd Henry Steel, was the vicar of the village church and all the siblings grew up at the vicarage in Woodsetts. Their mother, Elizabeth, was also the daughter of a clergyman.

The sisters' upbringing was probably strictly religious. The family employed two servants so life would have been quite comfortable. Near their home were some good golf links where Evelyn spent quite a lot of time. She won the Yorkshire Golf Championships five times and played in the English Team, International Golf for seven years. She also played croquet at International level.

In 1906/07 Revd Steel became semi-retired, aged by now in his early seventies, and the family moved to Bedford and lived in Goldington Road. Evelyn learned to ring church bells at St Mary's, Oakley in 1908 and probably Dorothy learned soon afterwards. Dorothy was always something of a reluctant conscript to ringing peals, unlike Evelyn, who was noted for her excellent ringing skills and rang in many peals throughout Bedfordshire. They were both affiliated to St Peter's tower for many years until 1937 when they transferred to St James, Biddenham. They moved to live in Biddenham, along with their widowed sister, Margaret, after their parents had died.

I've spoken to some local "more senior" ringers who knew and rang with Evelyn. She apparently always wore ankle length, dark coloured skirts with a wide leather belt, her hair tied back into a "bun". During World War 2 she helped deliver milk and mail every day in the Biddenham/Bromham area as most of the men were away doing National Service.

She was quite a character, just a bit "school ma'amish" but very well respected by all. Neither Evelyn nor Dorothy were ever married. Dorothy died in 1965 aged 81 years and Evelyn died in 1973 aged 94 years.

I've found it so interesting to put faces and some facts behind the names painted onto a peal board that we see every time we ring in the tower, as they once did before us.

Ann Desics

This article was first published in the St Peter de Merton parish magazine "NETWORK" in March 2013.

Tailenders' Report 2016

Our October meeting was in the cute village of **Piddington**. The weather was glorious, a crisp, sunny autumnal day and we were all looking forward to a good ring.

We rang the bells up but the tenor managed to slip wheel twice, rather disconcerting but these things happen. Then we rang call changes. Again the tenor caused a little problem but suddenly the whole rope whisked out of the ringer's hand and vanished from sight. Obviously the bell then rang itself down.



Nobody knew what had happened but the local ringer and a couple of our members went up to investigate. A piece of wood had come away from its position by the garter hole and caused all the problems. It was an unfortunate thing to happen but could not have been prevented and should be easily fixed.

We had lost a lot of time but rang some rounds on the front five and then a touch of Grandsire. This was surprisingly musical in a haunting, minor key. Then we rang down and went to lunch.

Lunch was at The Green Man in Lavendon, an old favourite of ours. The food was not expensive and everyone enjoyed their meal.

There were only 14 of us in total but hopefully our numbers will increase again as we head into the winter months.

Thanks go to the Entwistles for organising everything so well.

In November we met at **Colmworth**. It was quite a cold, autumnal day but luckily Felicity and Humphrey had heaters on in the church and ringing room and coffee and biscuits to warm us up. Both much appreciated.

We rang touches of Plain Bob minor and doubles, a touch of Grandsire doubles and a course of Cambridge minor. The bells went well but there were only a few of us fit and able to ring which limited the ringing a little.



Lunch was at the Wagon and Horses in Eaton Socon. We didn't have to book in advance but the service, from ordering to being placed on the table, was very quick. At £7.25 for two courses it was great food and excellent value.

Many thanks to Humphrey for making all the arrangements so efficiently and to Felicity for the coffee and biscuits.

Our December meeting had to be changed from the original tower of Maulden, but **Silsoe** was a very acceptable alternative. The bells are light and easy going and the ringing was good.

We started by ringing up and then going straight into Grandsire doubles. This was well rung and set the tone for the day. Grandsire doubles was rung again, there were two touches of Plain Bob doubles, one of Plain Bob minor, a course of Cambridge minor and one of Oxford Treble Bob.

Our Christmas lunch was at the Jolly Coopers in Wardhedges. There were only 28 of us but we had the room to ourselves and the meal was excellent. The starters were interesting and varied, the main meals were well cooked as were the accompanying vegetables and the desserts were delicious. Coffee and mince pies were also included in the very reasonable price. We were an extremely contented set of ringers as we made our way home.



Many thanks to Chris Catlin for organising things so efficiently including finding a tower near to our lunch venue at short notice.



Tailenders' Report 2017

We started the New Year on a cold but clear winter's day at **Little Staughton**. Non-ringers were pretty chilly in the church and it wasn't much warmer in the ringing room even though there was a heater.



The bells are an anti-clockwise five and they are not easy to ring. Some were odd struck, the ropes varied in length and one or two had a tendency to drop. For all these reasons the ringing was not very good.

We rang four lots of call changes with varying success. If anything, call changes (and calling them) is harder on an anti-clockwise ring than method ringing. An attempt was made at Grandsire doubles but a plain course was all that could be managed. The only other method rung was a 120 of Plain Bob doubles and that wasn't too bad once everyone got used to the bells.

Lunch was at The Wheatsheaf in Perry, a very nice pub/restaurant. We ordered from an extensive menu as we arrived and the food was served

very quickly indeed. It was a little more expensive than a lot of our lunch venues but the quality of the food and the wider range of dishes available more than made up for this.

Many thanks to Felicity Evans for organising such an interesting tower and delightful lunch venue.

Tailenders' Programme for 1st Quarter of 2017

Tuesday 10 January

Little Staughton

11.00 am – 12 noon, The Church of All Saints
5 bells, 10-2-20 cwt in G# (anti-clockwise)

Lunch at The Wheatsheaf, Perry

Arranged by Felicity Evans
Ringing Master: Barbara Woplin

Tuesday 14 February

Yardley Hastings

11.00 am – 12 noon, The Church of St Andrew
6 bells, 11-1-24 in F#

Lunch at The Green Man, Lavendon

Arranged by Ann Boyle
Ringing Master: Richard Entwistle

Tuesday 14 March

Bletsoe

11.00 am – 12 noon, The Church of St Mary
6 bells, 11-0-16 in F#

Lunch at The Queen's Head, Milton Ernest t.b.c.

Arranged by Barbara Woplin
Ringing Master: Derek Hammond

If you have previously indicated that you will attend a monthly meeting and find that you are unable to do so, please let the organiser know.

From the Editor

If in any article the only contact details are a website or email address, and you do not have internet access, then in case of difficulty making contact please ask the Editor to make an initial contact on your behalf.

Views expressed in an article are those of its author. Articles may be edited.

Thanks go to the 'regular' contributors, as well as to Ann Desics for her article on Misses Evelyn and Dorothy Steel.

The next Headstock will be distributed at the Quarterly District Meeting taking place on 1 April 2017 at Sharnbrook.

Please send your articles, announcements etc by 23 March 2017. Your input is what makes Headstock what it is.

Maureen Hall
Email: maureensgpost@gmail.com

Headstock

Headstock is issued quarterly and is available to all towers in the Bedford District at a cost of £1 per calendar year as a contribution towards printing costs, payable in January each year. The money is not being collected at present but contributions may be given to the District Bell Restoration Fund. Headstock is also available on the website of the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers www.bacbr.org.uk but the web version has all personal contact details as well as surnames of young ringers removed. If your tower does not currently receive Headstock then please contact the Editor at the address above.

